

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A content management system that facilitates user access to content stored within a plurality of network devices, comprising:

a contributor module associated with each  
5 respective network device, wherein each contributor module monitors content stored within a respective network device and announces the presence of the content to other network devices;

an aggregator module in communication with the  
10 network, wherein the aggregator module obtains and stores meta information from each contributor module about content stored within each respective network device; and

a user interface in communication with the  
15 network, wherein the user interface is associated with a respective type of content, wherein the user interface, in response to a user request, queries the aggregator module for content available on the network, displays results of the query, and, in response to user selection of displayed results, retrieves and presents content from  
20 one or more network devices.

2. The content management system of Claim 1, wherein the contributor module monitors content stored within a respective network device and announces the presence of content stored within the respective network  
5 device to other network devices substantially continuously.

3. The content management system of Claim 1, wherein the aggregator module obtains and stores meta information from each contributor module substantially continuously.

4. The content management system of Claim 1,

further comprising a categorizer module in communication with the aggregator module, wherein the categorizer module uses information stored by the aggregator module to arrange the content stored within the network devices into one or more content categories, and wherein the user interface retrieves content from the network devices and presents the retrieved content to users in response to user selection of a content category.

5           5.    The content management system of Claim 1, wherein the aggregator module monitors each contributor module for changes in content stored in each respective network device, and updates stored meta information to reflect changes in content stored within a respective network device.

6           6.    The content management system of Claim 1, wherein each contributor module is configured to tailor requested content prior to retrieval by the user interface.

7           7.    The content management system of Claim 1, wherein each contributor module is configured to change a format of requested content from a first format to a second format different from the first format prior to retrieval by the user interface.

8           8.    The content management system of Claim 1, wherein the aggregator module is configured to retrieve content from the network devices and store the retrieved content, and wherein the user interface is configured to retrieve content from the aggregator module and present the retrieved content to user selection.

9           9.    The content management system of Claim 1, further comprising a gateway connected to the network

that grants access to content stored within the network devices to authorized users via devices not connected to the network.

10. The content management system of Claim 1, wherein the content comprises audio content, and wherein the user interface comprises an audio player.

11. The content management system of Claim 1, wherein the content comprises video content, and wherein the user interface comprises a video player.

12. The content management system of Claim 1, wherein the content comprises image content, and wherein the user interface comprises an image viewer.

13. A content management system that facilitates user access to content stored within a plurality of network devices, comprising:

a contributor module associated with each respective network device, wherein each contributor module continuously monitors content stored within a respective network device and continuously announces the presence of the content to other network devices;

an aggregator module in communication with the network, wherein the aggregator module continuously obtains and stores meta information from each contributor module about content stored within each respective network device;

a categorizer module in communication with the aggregator module, wherein the categorizer module uses information stored by the aggregator module to arrange the content stored within the network devices into one or more content categories; and

a user interface in communication with the network, wherein the user interface is associated with a

25        respective type of content, wherein the user interface, in response to a user request, queries the aggregator module for content categories available on the network, displays results of the query, and, in response to user selection of a category, retrieves and presents content from one or more network devices.

5                14. The content management system of Claim 13, wherein the aggregator module monitors each contributor module for changes in content stored in each respective network device, and updates stored meta information to reflect changes in content stored within a respective network device.

              15. The content management system of Claim 13, wherein each contributor module is configured to tailor requested content prior to retrieval by the user interface.

5                16. The content management system of Claim 13, wherein each contributor module is configured to change a format of requested content from a first format to a second format different from the first format prior to retrieval by the user interface.

5                17. The content management system of Claim 13, wherein the aggregator module is configured to retrieve content from the network devices and store the retrieved content, and wherein the user interface is configured to retrieve content from the aggregator module and present the retrieved content to user selection.

              18. The content management system of Claim 13, further comprising a gateway connected to the network that grants access to content stored within the network devices to authorized users via devices not connected to

5 the network.

19. The content management system of Claim 13, wherein the content comprises audio content, and wherein the user interface comprises an audio player.

20. The content management system of Claim 13, wherein the content comprises video content, and wherein the user interface comprises a video player.

21. The content management system of Claim 13, wherein the content comprises image content, and wherein the user interface comprises an image viewer.

22. An audio content management system that facilitates user access to audio content stored within a plurality of network devices, comprising:

5 a contributor module associated with each respective network device, wherein each contributor module monitors audio content stored within a respective network device and announces the presence of the audio content to other network devices;

10 an aggregator module in communication with the network, wherein the aggregator module obtains and stores meta information from each contributor module about audio content stored within each respective network device;

15 a categorizer module in communication with the aggregator module, wherein the categorizer module uses meta information stored by the aggregator module to arrange the audio content stored within the network devices into one or more audio channels; and

20 a user interface in communication with the network, wherein the user interface comprises an audio player that retrieves and plays audio content from the network devices in response to user selection of a channel.

23. The audio content management system of Claim 22, wherein the contributor module monitors audio content stored within a respective network device and announces the presence of audio content stored within the respective network device to other network devices substantially continuously.

24. The audio content management system of Claim 22, wherein the aggregator module obtains and stores meta information from each contributor module substantially continuously.

25. The audio content management system of Claim 22, wherein the aggregator module monitors each contributor module for changes in audio content stored in each respective network device, and updates stored meta information to reflect changes in audio content stored within a respective network device.

26. The audio content management system of Claim 22, wherein each contributor module is configured to tailor audio content prior to retrieval by the user interface.

27. The audio content management system of Claim 22, wherein each contributor module is configured to change a format of audio content from a first format to a second format different from the first format prior to retrieval by the user interface.

28. The audio content management system of Claim 22, wherein the aggregator module is configured to retrieve audio content from the network devices and store the retrieved audio content, and wherein the user interface is configured to retrieve audio content from the aggregator module and present the retrieved audio

content to user selection.

29. The audio content management system of Claim 22, further comprising a gateway connected to the network that grants access to audio content stored within the network devices to authorized users via devices not  
5 connected to the network.

30. A video content management system that facilitates user access to video content stored within a plurality of network devices, comprising:

a contributor module associated with each  
5 respective network device, wherein each contributor module monitors video content stored within a respective network device and announces the presence of the video content to other network devices;

an aggregator module in communication with the  
10 network, wherein the aggregator module obtains and stores meta information from each contributor module about video content stored within each respective network device;

a categorizer module in communication with the aggregator module, wherein the categorizer module uses  
15 meta information stored by the aggregator module to arrange the video content stored within the network devices into one or more video channels; and

a user interface in communication with the network, wherein the user interface comprises a video  
20 player that retrieves and plays video content from the network devices in response to user selection of a channel.

31. The video content management system of Claim 30, wherein the contributor module monitors video content stored within a respective network device and announces the presence of video content stored within the  
5 respective network device to other network devices

substantially continuously.

32. The video content management system of Claim 30, wherein the aggregator module obtains and stores meta information from each contributor module substantially continuously.

33. The video content management system of Claim 30, wherein the aggregator module monitors each contributor module for changes in video content stored in each respective network device, and updates stored meta information to reflect changes in video content stored within a respective network device.

34. The video content management system of Claim 30, wherein each contributor module is configured to tailor video content prior to retrieval by the user interface.

35. The video content management system of Claim 30, wherein each contributor module is configured to change a format of video content from a first format to a second format different from the first format prior to retrieval by the user interface.

36. The video content management system of Claim 30, wherein the aggregator module is configured to retrieve video content from the network devices and store the retrieved video content, and wherein the user interface is configured to retrieve video content from the aggregator module and present the retrieved video content to user selection.

37. The video content management system of Claim 30, further comprising a gateway connected to the network that grants access to video content stored within



the network devices to authorized users via devices not  
connected to the network.

38. A content management system that facilitates user access to content stored within a plurality of network devices, comprising:

a contributor module associated with each respective network device, wherein each contributor module monitors content stored within a respective network device and announces the presence of the content to other network devices;

an aggregator module in communication with the network, wherein the aggregator module obtains and stores meta information from each contributor module about content stored within each respective network device;

a categorizer module in communication with the aggregator module, wherein the categorizer module uses information stored by the aggregator module to arrange the content stored within the network devices into one or more content categories;

a user interface in communication with the network, wherein the user interface is associated with a respective type of content, wherein the user interface, in response to a user request, queries the aggregator module for content categories available on the network, displays results of the query, and, in response to user selection of a category, retrieves and presents content from one or more network devices; and

a gateway connected to the network that grants access to content stored within the network devices to authorized users via devices not connected to the network.

39. The content management system of Claim 38, wherein the contributor module monitors content stored within a respective network device and announces the

5 presence of content stored within the respective network device to other network devices substantially continuously.

40. The content management system of Claim 38, wherein the aggregator module obtains and stores meta information from each contributor module substantially continuously.

5 41. The content management system of Claim 38, wherein the aggregator module monitors each contributor module for changes in content stored in each respective network device, and updates stored meta information to reflect changes in content stored within a respective network device.

42. The content management system of Claim 38, wherein each contributor module is configured to tailor requested content prior to retrieval by the user interface.

5 43. The content management system of Claim 38, wherein each contributor module is configured to change a format of requested content from a first format to a second format different from the first format prior to retrieval by the user interface.

5 44. The content management system of Claim 38, wherein the aggregator module is configured to retrieve content from the network devices and store the retrieved content, and wherein the user interface is configured to retrieve content from the aggregator module and present the retrieved content to user selection.

45. The content management system of Claim 38, wherein the content comprises audio content, and wherein

the user interface comprises an audio player.

46. The content management system of Claim 38, wherein the content comprises video content, and wherein the user interface comprises a video player.

47. The content management system of Claim 38, wherein the content comprises image content, and wherein the user interface comprises an image viewer.

48. A method of facilitating user access to content stored within a plurality of network devices, comprising:

publishing content stored within each network device via a respective contributor module associated with each network device;

aggregating meta information about content stored within each network device via an aggregator module in communication with each contributor module; and

presenting content to users via a user interface, wherein the user interface queries the aggregator module for content available on the network, displays results of the query, and, in response to user selection of displayed results, retrieves and presents content from one or more network devices.

49. The method of Claim 48, wherein publishing content stored within each network device via a respective contributor module comprises:

monitoring content stored within a network device; and

announcing the presence of content stored within each network device to other network devices.

50. The method of Claim 49, wherein monitoring content stored within each network device and announcing

the presence of content stored within each network device is performed substantially continuously via each respective contributor module.

51. The method of Claim 48, wherein aggregating meta information from each contributor module is performed substantially continuously via the aggregator module.

52. The method of Claim 48, further comprising categorizing the content stored within the network devices into one or more content categories via a categorizer module in communication with the aggregator module.

53. The method of Claim 48, further comprising tailoring requested content prior to retrieval by the user interface.

54. The method of Claim 48, further comprising changing a format of requested content from a first format to a second format different from the first format prior to retrieval by the user interface.

55. The method of Claim 48, further comprising retrieving content from the network devices and storing the retrieved content within the aggregator module.

56. The method of Claim 48, further comprising granting external network access to content stored within the network devices to authorized users via a gateway connected to the network.

57. The method of Claim 48, wherein the content comprises audio content, and wherein the user interface comprises an audio player.

58. The method of Claim 48, wherein the content comprises video content, and wherein the user interface comprises a video player.

59. The method of Claim 48, wherein the content comprises image content, and wherein the user interface comprises an image viewer.

60. A method of facilitating user access to content stored within a plurality of network devices, comprising:

5 publishing content stored within each network device substantially continuously via a respective contributor module associated with each network device;

aggregating meta information about content stored within each network device substantially continuously via an aggregator module in communication with each contributor module;

10 categorizing the content stored within the network devices into one or more content categories via a categorizer module in communication with the aggregator module; and

15 presenting content to users via a user interface, wherein the user interface queries the aggregator module for content available on the network, displays results of the query, and, in response to user selection of displayed results, retrieves and presents content from one or more network devices.

20 61. The method of Claim 60, wherein publishing content stored within each network device via a respective contributor module comprises:

5 monitoring content stored within a network device; and

announcing the presence of content stored within each network device to other network devices.

62. The method of Claim 60, further comprising tailoring requested content prior to retrieval by the user interface.

63. The method of Claim 60, further comprising changing a format of requested content from a first format to a second format different from the first format prior to retrieval by the user interface.

64. The method of Claim 60, further comprising retrieving content from the network devices and storing the retrieved content within the aggregator module.

65. The method of Claim 60, further comprising granting external network access to content stored within the network devices to authorized users via a gateway connected to the network.

66. The method of Claim 60, wherein the content comprises audio content, and wherein the user interface comprises an audio player.

67. The method of Claim 60, wherein the content comprises video content, and wherein the user interface comprises a video player.

68. The method of Claim 60, wherein the content comprises image content, and wherein the user interface comprises an image viewer.

69. A method of facilitating user access to audio content stored within a plurality of network devices, comprising:

publishing audio content stored within each network device via a respective contributor module associated with each network device;

aggregating meta information about audio content stored within each network device via an aggregator module in communication with each contributor module;

categorizing the audio content stored within the network devices into one or more audio content channels via a categorizer module in communication with the aggregator module; and

presenting audio content to users via a user interface in communication with the network, wherein the user interface comprises an audio player that retrieves and plays audio content from the network devices in response to user selection of a channel.

70. The method of Claim 69, wherein publishing audio content stored within each network device via a respective contributor module comprises:

monitoring audio content stored within a network device; and

announcing the presence of audio content stored within each network device to other network devices.

71. The method of Claim 70, wherein monitoring audio content stored within each network device and announcing the presence of audio content stored within each network device is performed substantially continuously via each respective contributor module.

72. The method of Claim 69, wherein aggregating meta information from each contributor module is performed substantially continuously via the aggregator module.

73. The method of Claim 69, further comprising tailoring requested audio content prior to retrieval by the user interface.

74. The method of Claim 69, further comprising changing a format of requested audio content from a first format to a second format different from the first format prior to retrieval by the user interface.

75. The method of Claim 69, further comprising retrieving audio content from the network devices and storing the retrieved audio content within the aggregator module.

76. The method of Claim 69, further comprising granting external network access to audio content stored within the network devices to authorized users via a gateway connected to the network.

77. A method of facilitating user access to video content stored within a plurality of network devices, comprising:

publishing video content stored within each network device via a respective contributor module associated with each network device;

aggregating meta information about video content stored within each network device via an aggregator module in communication with each contributor module;

categorizing the video content stored within the network devices into one or more video content channels via a categorizer module in communication with the aggregator module; and

presenting video content to users via a user interface in communication with the network, wherein the user interface comprises a video player that retrieves and plays video content from the network devices in response to user selection of a channel.

78. The method of Claim 77, wherein publishing



video content stored within each network device via a respective contributor module comprises:

monitoring video content stored within a network device; and

announcing the presence of video content stored within each network device to other network devices.

79. The method of Claim 78, wherein monitoring video content stored within each network device and announcing the presence of video content stored within each network device is performed substantially continuously via each respective contributor module.

80. The method of Claim 77, wherein aggregating meta information from each contributor module is performed substantially continuously via the aggregator module.

81. The method of Claim 77, further comprising tailoring requested video content prior to retrieval by the user interface.

82. The method of Claim 77, further comprising changing a format of requested video content from a first format to a second format different from the first format prior to retrieval by the user interface.

83. The method of Claim 77, further comprising retrieving video content from the network devices and storing the retrieved video content within the aggregator module.

84. The method of Claim 77, further comprising granting external network access to video content stored within the network devices to authorized users via a gateway connected to the network.